

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 643

By Cooper J

A RESOLUTION to commend Fred and Laura Harris for their honorable and astute service to the people of Tennessee.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should pause to specially recognize those estimable public servants who have dedicated themselves to improving the quality of life for their fellow citizens; and

WHEREAS, Fred and Laura Harris are such citizens who evince the greatest integrity and probity in all their chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, throughout their lives, they have distinguished themselves as public-spirited citizens of the highest order and as exceptional assets to their community; and

WHEREAS, born and raised in Jackson, Laura Harris studied journalism at Union University, where she was a member of the Zeta Tau Alpha sorority; and

WHEREAS, following graduation, she immediately embarked on a lifetime of public service; she moved to Washington, D.C., where she worked in the Fingerprint Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation under the legendary J. Edgar Hoover; and

WHEREAS, a few years later, Mrs. Harris returned to her hometown and her alma mater to work in public relations; while there, she met her future husband who was taking some classes; and

WHEREAS, Fred and Laura Harris knew each other for several years before they eventually started dating; they fell in love while sitting at a back table in the Student Union “solving the world’s problems,” a practice that they have continued throughout their 38-year marriage; and

WHEREAS, Laura Harris employed her journalistic talents on behalf of the *Jackson Sun*, writing a column titled “All Around Town,” before she and Fred eventually moved to Nashville; and

WHEREAS, as a resident of Nashville, she has remained true to her ideals and deep desire to serve her fellow citizens; she made invaluable contributions to the 1977 Constitutional Convention, and she has served with acumen and alacrity for twenty-two years as a valuable employee of the Senate Clerk’s Office; and

WHEREAS, her professional excellence aside, Laura Harris is involved in numerous noteworthy organizations and activities and has earned a reputation as an outstanding athlete; a brilliant tennis player, she has won several trophies and championships, and she and Fred cherish any opportunity to head out on the links and play golf together; and

WHEREAS, Fred Harris has long been instrumental in expanding Nashville’s industrial and economic base; he has utilized his expertise as a demographic expert, psychologist, business consultant, and politician to promote Nashville’s interests; and

WHEREAS, he has earned the respect and admiration of the greater Nashville community while serving as Vice President of Economic Development for the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce for the past twenty-two years; with great success, he has built a career by selling Nashville as a choice business address, and thousands of Tennesseans can thank him for their current employment positions; and

WHEREAS, his greatest successes have included securing the Tennessee operations of Nissan, HCA, and Dell; his tactics have been brilliant and effective, and he has shown a remarkable ability to innovate and adapt to any situation; and

WHEREAS, on a memorable summer evening during the time when Nissan was considering locating in Smyrna, Laura Harris prepared sushi for a group of Japanese businessmen; after dinner, the entire party went out on the golf course to catch lightning bugs, which are not native to Japan and fascinated the Harrises' guests; and

WHEREAS, modest, unaffected, and good-humored, Fred Harris's authentic, reassuring charm and affability have served him and Tennessee very well; his cumulative contributions have inspired the Tennessee Industrial Development Council to establish an award in his honor, the Fred H. Harris Economic Development Award, which is given annually to an individual who has made significant contributions to the economic development of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, one of the first to receive the award was Tennessee Valley Authority Board Member Bill Baxter, formerly Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development, who remarked, "One of my greatest thrills was winning that my first year over ECD. Fred is a master. He's very effective with the soft sell, and that's a lost art. I don't think anybody understands regional cooperation better than he does. He sees the big picture"; and

WHEREAS, many others have praised Mr. Harris, including former AmSouth Bancorporation Chairman Denny Bortorff, who has described Mr. Harris as "the institution of economic development"; and

WHEREAS, taking a well-deserved retirement this year, Fred Harris has continued to serve his beloved city by ensuring that development and recruiting efforts will remain in good hands; possessing a wonderful ability to train and mentor others, he helped nurture his worthy successor, Janet Miller, who has worked alongside him since 1993; and

WHEREAS, Fred and Laura Harris's impact on Tennessee has been truly remarkable; Tennessee is a better place because they have chosen to work on behalf of their fellow citizens; and

WHEREAS, the Harrises' remarkable success as public servants and civic leaders is directly attributable to their reliance on the time-honored values of hard work and common sense and their uncommon ability to work well with people from all walks of life; and

WHEREAS, they are an extremely giving persons and epitomize the ideal of the consummate professional, dedicated public servant, and reliable friend and neighbor in Nashville; and

WHEREAS, their many accomplishments aside, Fred and Laura Harris are deeply devoted to each other and feel very fortunate to share deep love and companionship; and

WHEREAS, Fred and Laura Harris are wholly committed to the noble precepts of public service that have earned Tennessee recognition as the "Volunteer State," and they should be specially recognized; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, That we hereby commend Fred and Laura Harris for their honorable and astute service to the good people of Tennessee and salute their unswerving commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we express to them our best wishes for much continued success and happiness.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.